



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

PHARMACY COVERAGE GUIDELINES  
SECTION: DRUGS

ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE: 1/01/2016  
LAST REVIEW DATE: 11/19/2020  
LAST CRITERIA REVISION DATE: 11/19/2020  
ARCHIVE DATE:

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**BEXAROTENE oral capsule**  
**TARGRETIN® (bexarotene) oral capsule**  
**TARGRETIN® (bexarotene) external gel**

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Coverage for services, procedures, medical devices and drugs are dependent upon benefit eligibility as outlined in the member's specific benefit plan. This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline must be read in its entirety to determine coverage eligibility, if any.

This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline provides information related to coverage determinations only and does not imply that a service or treatment is clinically appropriate or inappropriate. The provider and the member are responsible for all decisions regarding the appropriateness of care. Providers should provide BCBSAZ complete medical rationale when requesting any exceptions to these guidelines.

The section identified as "Description" defines or describes a service, procedure, medical device or drug and is in no way intended as a statement of medical necessity and/or coverage.

The section identified as "Criteria" defines criteria to determine whether a service, procedure, medical device or drug is considered medically necessary or experimental or investigational.

State or federal mandates, e.g., FEP program, may dictate that any drug, device or biological product approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may not be considered experimental or investigational and thus the drug, device or biological product may be assessed only on the basis of medical necessity.

Pharmacy Coverage Guidelines are subject to change as new information becomes available.

For purposes of this Pharmacy Coverage Guideline, the terms "experimental" and "investigational" are considered to be interchangeable.

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This Pharmacy Coverage Guideline does not apply to FEP or other states' Blues Plans.

Information about medications that require precertification is available at [www.azblue.com/pharmacy](http://www.azblue.com/pharmacy).

Some large (100+) benefit plan groups may customize certain benefits, including adding or deleting precertification requirements.

All applicable benefit plan provisions apply, e.g., waiting periods, limitations, exclusions, waivers and benefit maximums.

Precertification for medication(s) or product(s) indicated in this guideline requires completion of the [request form](#) in its entirety with the chart notes as documentation. **All requested data must be provided.** Once completed the form must be signed by the prescribing provider and faxed back to BCBSAZ Pharmacy Management at (602)

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864-3126 or emailed to [Pharmacyprecert@azblue.com](mailto:Pharmacyprecert@azblue.com). Incomplete forms or forms without the chart notes will be returned.

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**Bexarotene oral capsule**  
**Targretin (bexarotene) oral capsule**

- **Criteria for initial therapy:** Targretin (bexarotene) or generic bexarotene oral capsule is considered **medically necessary** and will be approved when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
1. Prescriber is a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with an Oncologist
  2. Individual is 18 years of age or older
  3. A confirmed diagnosis of **ONE** of the following:
    - a. Cutaneous manifestations of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL) that is refractory to at least one prior systemic therapy
      - i. Systemic therapy may include: oral retinoid (acitretin or isotretinoin), alpha-interferon, Zolinza (vorinostat), Istodax (romidepsin), methotrexate, cyclophosphamide, chlorambucil, Nipent (pentostatin), and other
    - b. Other request for a specific oncologic direct treatment use that is found and listed in the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines with Categories of Evidence and Consensus of 1 and 2A
  4. For Targretin (bexarotene) oral capsule, individual has failed, or is intolerant to, or has a contraindication to generic bexarotene oral capsule
  5. **ALL** of the following baseline tests have been completed before initiation of treatment with continued monitoring as clinically appropriate:
    - a. Fasting lipid profile
    - b. Liver function tests
    - c. Thyroid function tests
    - d. Complete blood count with differentia
    - e. Negative pregnancy test one week before starting therapy in a woman of child bearing potential
  6. There are **NO** contraindications
    - a. Contraindications include:
      - i. Woman of child bearing potential who is pregnant

**Initial approval duration:** 6 months

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## BEXAROTENE oral capsule TARGRETIN® (bexarotene) oral capsule TARGRETIN® (bexarotene) external gel

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- **Criteria for continuation of coverage (renewal request):** Targretin (bexarotene) or generic bexarotene oral capsule is considered **medically necessary** and will be approved with documentation of **ALL** of the following:
1. Individual continues to be seen by a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with an Oncologist
  2. Individual's condition responded while on therapy
    - a. Response is defined as:
      - i. No evidence of disease progression
        1. Worsening or progression is defined as worsening of index lesion(s) or development of new cutaneous tumor lesions or development of non-cutaneous manifestations of disease
      - ii. Documented evidence of efficacy, disease stability and/or improvement
        1. Evidence of efficacy or improvement is defined as at least a 50% improvement or complete disappearance of the index lesion(s)
  3. Individual has been adherent with the medication
  4. Individual has not developed any contraindications or other significant level 4 adverse drug effects that may exclude continued use
    - a. Contraindications as listed in the criteria for initial therapy section
    - b. Significant adverse drug effect such as:
      - i. Liver tests that exceed 3x ULN for AST, ALT, or bilirubin
      - ii. Hepatotoxicity
      - iii. Pancreatitis
      - iv. Neutropenia
  5. There are no significant interacting drugs

**Renewal duration:** 12 months

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## Targretin (bexarotene) gel

- **Criteria for initial therapy:** Targretin (bexarotene) external gel is considered **medically necessary** and will be approved when **ALL** of the following criteria are met:
1. Prescriber is a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with an Oncologist
  2. Individual is 18 years of age or older
  3. A confirmed diagnosis of **ONE** of the following:

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- a. Cutaneous manifestations of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL) Stage IA and IB who have refractory or persistent disease after other therapies or who have not tolerated other therapies
    - i. Topical therapy may include: topical corticosteroids, topical chemotherapy (such as nitrogen mustard and carmustine), local superficial radiation, phototherapy (such as PUVA and UVB), total skin electron beam radiation and topical imiquimod
  - b. Other request for a specific oncologic direct treatment use that is found and listed in the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Guidelines with Categories of Evidence and Consensus of 1 and 2A
4. **ALL** of the following baseline tests have been completed before initiation of treatment with continued monitoring as clinically appropriate:
- a. Negative pregnancy test one week before starting therapy in a woman of child bearing potential
5. There are **NO** contraindications
- a. Contraindications include:
    - i. Woman of child bearing potential who is pregnant

**Initial approval duration:** 6 months

- **Criteria for continuation of coverage (renewal request):** Targretin (bexarotene) external gel is considered **medically necessary** and will be approved with documentation of **ALL** of the following:
1. Individual continues to be seen by a physician specializing in the patient's diagnosis or is in consultation with an Oncologist
  2. Individual's condition responded while on therapy
    - a. Response is defined as:
      - i. No evidence of disease progression
        1. Worsening or progression is defined as worsening of index lesion(s) or development of new cutaneous tumor lesions or development of non-cutaneous manifestations of disease
      - ii. Documented evidence of efficacy, disease stability and/or improvement
        1. Evidence of efficacy or improvement is defined as at least a 50% improvement or complete disappearance of the index lesion(s)
  3. Individual has been adherent with the medication
  4. Individual has not developed any contraindications or other significant level 4 adverse drug effects that may exclude continued use
    - a. Contraindications as listed in the criteria for initial therapy section
    - b. Significant adverse drug effect such as:

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- i. Severe skin rash, itching or skin pain
5. There are no significant interacting drugs

**Renewal duration:** 12 months

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**Description:**

Targretin (bexarotene) capsules are indicated for the treatment of cutaneous manifestations of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL) in patients who are refractory to at least one prior systemic therapy. Targretin (bexarotene) 1% gel is indicated for the topical treatment of cutaneous lesions in patients with CTCL (Stage IA and IB) who have refractory or persistent disease after other therapies or who have not tolerated other therapies.

Lymphoma is a common blood cancer. There are two main forms of lymphoma: Hodgkin lymphoma (HL) and non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL). Lymphoma occurs when lymphocytes grow and multiply uncontrollably, and travel to other parts of the body, such as lymph nodes, spleen, bone marrow, blood, or other organs. Two types of lymphocytes can develop into lymphomas: B-lymphocytes (B-cells) and T-lymphocytes (T-cells). T-cell lymphomas account for approximately 15 percent of all NHLs in the United States.

One of the most common forms of T-cell lymphoma is cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL), a general term for T-cell lymphomas that involve the skin. CTCL also can involve the blood, the lymph nodes, and other internal organs. Most patients with CTCL experience only skin symptoms, without serious complications; however, approximately 10 percent of those who progress to later stages develop serious complications. Early stage CTCL is typically indolent; some patients with early-stage CTCL might not progress to later stages at all, while others might progress rapidly, with the cancer spreading to lymph nodes and/or internal organs.

Mycosis fungoides (MF) and Sezary syndrome (SS) are two types of CTCL. MF (also known as Alibert-Bazin syndrome or granuloma fungoides) is the most common form of CTCL that generally affects the skin. In MF, malignant T-cells migrate and accumulate in the skin, initially resulting in dry skin and red rash that may or may not itch, eventually other skin lesions form. The malignant T-cells may also involve lymph nodes and spread to other areas such as liver, spleen, and lungs. SS is a more aggressive form of CTCL with widespread skin involvement, enlarged lymph nodes and malignant lymphocytes (Sezary cells) in the skin, lymph nodes, and blood.

Lymphoma of the skin is classified into various stages depending upon skin (T), node (N), viscera (M), and blood (B) involvement. In Stage IA, less than 10% of the skin is covered with patches, papules, and/or plaques, lymph nodes are not enlarged, there is no visceral involvement, and the blood may or may not contain circulating sezary cells, defined as < 5% of peripheral blood. With Stage IB, 10% or more of the skin is covered with patches, papules, and/or plaques. The lymph nodes are not enlarged, there is no visceral involvement, and the blood may or may not contain circulating sezary cells, defined as < 5% of peripheral blood.

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In Stage IIA, any amount of skin may be covered with patches, papules and/or plaques, lymph nodes are enlarged and may or may not have abnormal cells, there is still no visceral involvement, and the blood may or may not contain circulating Sezary cells. Stage IIB has the same characteristics except now there are one or more tumorous skin lesions.

With Stage III, there is erythrodermic skin (greater than 80% of body surface with red patches, papules, or plaques), the lymph nodes may or may not be enlarged, when enlarged the nodes may or may not contain abnormal cells, and there is no visceral involvement. With Stage IIIA there are no circulating Sezary cells in the blood, with Stage IIIB there are circulating Sezary cells.

In Stages IVA and IVB, patches, papules, plaques or tumors involve any amount of the skin surface. The lymph nodes tend to be enlarged and contain atypical cells and there is a significant level of Sezary cells in the blood. Patients with visceral involvement are classified as Stage IVB.

Sezary syndrome is a leukemic form of CTCL in which there is significant blood involvement with Sezary cells, lymphadenopathy, and erythrodermic skin.

Stages IA, IB, and IIA are considered early stage MF. Prognosis and survival depends on the stage at diagnosis. In the management of early-stage MF, skin-directed therapies may be categorized in two ways: "skin-limited therapies" for limited or localized disease and "skin-generalized therapies" for generalized skin involvement.

Skin-limited therapies include: topical corticosteroids, topical chemotherapy (such as nitrogen mustard and carmustine), local superficial radiation, topical retinoids (such as bexarotene and tazarotene), phototherapy (such as PUVA and UVB), and topical imiquimod.

Skin-generalized therapies include: topical corticosteroids, topical chemotherapy (such as nitrogen mustard and carmustine), phototherapy (such as PUVA and UVB), and total skin electron beam radiation.

Systemic therapies include: oral retinoids (acitretin, bexarotene, & isotretinoin), alpha-interferon, Zolinza (vorinostat), Istodax (romidepsin), methotrexate, cyclophosphamide, chlorambucil, Nipent (pentostatin), and others.

Targretin (bexarotene) is a member of a subclass of retinoids that selectively activate retinoid X receptors (RXRs). These retinoid receptors have biologic activity distinct from that of retinoic acid receptors (RARs).

Bexarotene selectively binds and activates retinoid X receptor subtypes (RXR $\alpha$ , RXR $\beta$ , RXR $\gamma$ ). RXRs can form heterodimers with various receptor partners such as retinoic acid receptors (RARs), vitamin D receptor, thyroid receptor, and peroxisome proliferator activator receptors (PPARs). Once activated, these receptors function as transcription factors that regulate the expression of genes that control cellular differentiation and proliferation. Bexarotene inhibits the growth *in vitro* of some tumor cell lines of hematopoietic and squamous cell origin. It also induces tumor regression *in vivo* in some animal models. The exact mechanism of action of bexarotene in the treatment of CTCL is unknown.

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**Resources:**

Targretin (bexarotene) capsule Package Insert, revised by manufacturer 04-2020, accessed 07-13-20 at DailyMed

Targretin (bexarotene) gel Package Insert, revised by manufacturer 02-2020, accessed 07-13-20 at DailyMed

UpToDate: Treatment of early stage (IA to IIA) mycosis fungoides. Current through Aug 2017

UpToDate: Treatment of Sezary syndrome. Current through Aug 2017

NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: T-cell lymphomas. Version 2.2017, Feb 21, 2017

Off Label Use of Cancer Medications: A.R.S. §§ 20-826(R) & (S). Subscription contracts; definitions.

Off Label Use of Cancer Medications: A.R.S. §§ 20-1057(V) & (W). Evidence of coverage by health care service organizations; renewability; definitions.

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